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Notes and Observations

EUPITHECIA ABIETARIA (GOEZE), (LEP.: GEOMETRIDAE)
— BREEDING IN WALES — In view of the paucity of records of this elusive moth in Britain generally and in Wales in particular it is worth recording that at a meeting of the Lancashire and Cheshire Entomological Society at Worlds End, Clwyd on 6th September 1986 when ten members and friends worked the district conscientiously in inclement weather very little of interest was seen but the penultimate paragraph about the meeting in the Society's Proceedings reads:—

“A walk in the forestry ride on the other side of the road was little more productive but what we at first sign took to be a stand of Sitka spruce was found to have dropped some very large cones in the recent winds and these identified the trees as noble fir (*Abies procera* Rehder), some of the cones showed signs of larval feeding and one that was opened up was found to contain a microlepidopterous larva, to be identified in the fullness of time.”

As the larvae appeared to be microlepidoptera, Dr. Mike Hull took a good sample hoping to identify the incumbent but got only a large number of parasites. I took only six cones, mainly for the purpose of checking the identity of the tree. On the 2nd June 1987 a fine male *Eupithecia abietaria* (Goeze) emerged from these.

The status of this species in Britain has not been well understood in recent times and Skinner (Skinner B. *Moths of the British Isles*, 1984) even suggested that it might be extinct as a breeding species and that the odd specimens taken could be the result of accidental importation or immigration. Subsequently, Skinner himself discovered a strong breeding colony in Northumberland. Single specimens have also been taken rather randomly over much of Northern Britain.

I have myself often collected a large number of spruce cones from various localities, including Scotland, the Forest and Wales,

without ever finding the moth and I know that many other collectors have had similar disappointments.

As far as Wales is concerned, Gordon Smith (*Proc. Chester Society of Natural Science, Literature and Art*, 1948) could only find two records of single moths taken in the Northern Counties of Wales covered by his paper, the most recent was at Ial in 1948 by R. E. Vaughan Roberts; this is only about five miles from Worlds End.

There can be no doubt that Norway spruce (*Picea abies* Karsten) is an acceptable food-plant in the wild but one wonders if the larger (and potentially more nourishing?) cones of the noble fir and its close relatives are equally acceptable; I recall a paper by J. H. Styles (*Entomologist* 94: 88) which reported damage to the cones of silver fir in Hepburn Wood, Northumberland. This locality is about ten miles from Skinner's new locality in the same county. I visited Hepburn Wood some years ago and could find only the odd old silver fir among the plantations of douglas fir and spruce and these had not dropped any cones when I was there. The specific name of the moth now in use does not help us to resolve the question!

The specimen referred to would have been my first encounter with the species but for a fortuitous catch in 1985 when a specimen was found sitting on the outside of my trap in Alderley Edge on the morning of 30th June 1985; the strange thing is that 1984 was one of the few years in which I had not collected cones in my search for this species, it must therefore be regarded as most probably the first in Cheshire as the only other report of its occurrence, in the Wirral some years earlier was never substantiated and no specimen was kept. My specimen was therefore another of those which turn up unexpectedly around the country and I am left wondering if they are breeding thinly on the various ornamental firs growing in parks and gardens. C. I. RUTHERFORD, Longridge, Macclesfield Road, Alderley Edge, Cheshire. SK9 7BL

NEW LEPIDOPTERA RECORDS FOR BRECONSHIRE IN 1986 — Three species of Lepidoptera were caught in the Rothamsted Insect Survey light trap at Lysdinam (Site No. 111, O.S. Grid Ref. SO 009 586) in Breconshire which, so far as I am aware, have not previously been recorded from the county.

Single males of *Eupithecia subumbrata* D. & S. and *E. trisignaria* H.S. (Geometridae) were caught on 6th and 21st August respectively and their identifications were confirmed by examination of the genitalia. *Schrankia costaestrigalis* Steph. (Nocutidae) was found to be fairly common with five individuals trapped between 27th July and 18th August.

From a survey of the distribution of British Eupitheciini (Riley and Prior, in prep.) and the comments of Heath (1983, *Moths and*